

MAINE HEALTH ALERT NETWORK



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*****ALERT – Important Information*****

2008PHALT002

TO: County EMA; School Nurses; School-Based Health Centers; FQHC; Home Health; Hospitals; ICPs; LTCs; Local Health Officers; Public Health Optional and Required; Public Health Nursing; Regional Resource Centers; EMS; ME Primary Care

FROM: Dora Anne Mills, M.D., M.P.H., Public Health Director

SUBJECT: Air Quality Alert for Southwest Coast, Mid-Coast, Western Interior and Eastern Interior regions

DATE: July 7, 2008

TIME: 3:15 PM

PAGES: 2

PRIORITY: High

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Air Quality Alert for Tuesday and Wednesday

(AUGUSTA)—On Tuesday, ground-level ozone concentrations are expected to reach the “unhealthy for sensitive groups” level for the Southwest Coast, Mid-Coast, Western Interior and Eastern Interior regions while “unhealthy” levels are expected for the high elevations of Acadia National Park, according to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The coastal regions are likely to record higher levels of ozone than interior regions so everyone, not just sensitive groups, should take precautions.

It currently looks like ozone levels will reach the “unhealthy for sensitive groups” level again on Wednesday.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently revised the national ozone standard from 84 parts per billion (ppb) to 75 ppb. At the same time, the Air Quality Index (AQI) for ozone was revised to reflect the new more protective standard. If Maine has a typical summer this year, the DEP will likely be encouraging you to take precautions to protect your health more often than usual because of this revised standard.

At high ozone levels, individuals suffering from a respiratory disease such as asthma, children, and healthy active adults can experience reduced lung function and irritation. When this happens, individuals may notice a shortness of breath, coughing, throat irritation, and/or experience an uncomfortable sensation in their chest.

Some actions you can take to protect your health during periods of unhealthy air quality include:

- Avoid strenuous activity, such as jogging, during mid-day.
- Close windows and circulate indoor air with a fan or air conditioner.
- Avoid using aerosol products such as cleaners, paints, and other lung irritants.
- Give yourself a break and take it easy.

Ground level ozone is formed by chemical reactions between nitrogen oxides (NO_x), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and sunlight. Man-made sources of NO_x and VOCs include automobiles, trucks and buses, large combustion and industrial sources such as power generating facilities, consumer products such as paints and cleaners, and gas-powered lawn and garden equipment.

Citizens can take the following actions to help reduce emissions that contribute to the formation of ozone:

- Conserve electricity.
- Choose a cleaner commute, such as carpooling or using public transportation.
- Defer the use of gas-powered lawn and garden equipment until after dusk.
- Limit idling of vehicles.
- Refuel cars and trucks after dusk.
- Combine errands and reduce vehicle trips.
- Use environmentally-friendly paints and cleaning products with low VOC content.

For more information call DEP's toll free ozone hotline at 1-800-223-1196 or visit DEP's air quality web site by going to MaineDEP.com and select 'Maine Air Quality Forecast.'